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Information About the Agricultural Conservation Program

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Every person's future is linked directly with soil and water—the use, management and conservation of the Nation's agricultural resources. All of us must have ample food, good water, sufficient clothing and adequate housing.

Two-thirds of all raw materials used by American industry and commerce are products of our agricultural resources.

More than a third of the total work force in the United States depends directly on the production from agricultural resources.

Transporters, warehousemen, market men, processors, salesmen and others who handle crop and livestock products after they leave the farm depend on agricultural resources for much of their business.

Sellers of seed, feed, fertilizer, insecticides, machinery, automobiles, tires, gasoline, appliances, food, clothing, and other goods or services are directly affected by farm production and income from agricultural resources.



## Agricultural Conservation Is Important to You

Hunters and fishermen depend on agricultural resources because 80 percent of our wildlife available for hunting and much good fishing is provided by privately owned farm and timber lands and water.

Only about one-third of the need for farm, ranch and woodland conservation work now is being met. The cost of meeting all of the resource conservation problems on privately owned agricultural lands would be about \$2.5 billion a year. This is one-fifth of the current net farm income of all farmers.

Of the agricultural conservation work now being done on private lands about two-thirds is carried on with public assistance programs bearing a part of the cost. The Agricultural Conservation Program is the largest such financial assistance program.

This leaflet answers questions about the ACP on matters of particular interest to people in rural areas. However, the information in this leaflet will be of interest to all citizens because it reports on conservation accomplishments bought with their tax dollars.

*Horace D. Godfrey*

HORACE D. GODFREY, Administrator

# Farmer-Government Partnership in Action

*Q—What is the Agricultural Conservation Program?*

A—The ACP is a nation-wide conservation program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The ACP began in 1936 and shares with farmers (including ranchers and woodland owners) the cost of some of the conservation practices needed to protect, improve and renew soil, water, woodland and wildlife resources on privately owned farmland. Congress authorizes these public funds as the public's share of an investment in conservation work needed in the public interest.

*Q—Why is cost-sharing needed for conservation on privately owned farmland?*

A—Conservation work on farms is done by the persons who control the land. However, conservation farming is more than just good farming. Often, the conservation work needed in the public interest costs more than a prudent farmer can afford to invest from his own resources, considering the many expenses he bears in relation to his farm income. Many conservation practices which benefit the Nation, bring little or no return to a farmer, or repay him only after a long time.

*Q—Are practices in the ACP sound for the farm and area?*

A—Yes. Practices are based on accurate knowledge of the conservation problems and the measures needed to accomplish a sound conservation program for the farm or area. Specifications set up for practices are based on experiment station research, field experience of trained technicians, and



experience and observation of farmers. Technical services for those practices that require them are provided for the ACP by the Soil Conservation Service and Forest Service, the latter working through State forestry agencies.

*Q—On how many farms is  
ACP cost-sharing used?*

A—About one and a quarter million farms a year. Over a 3- to 5-year period, about two-thirds of the Nation's farmland is in farms which participate in the program.

*Q—How does ACP affect  
production of row  
crops and small grain?*

A—The great bulk of ACP practices now being cost-shared help shift land away from row crop and small grain production, or help delay its return to that kind of use.

*Q—Does ACP help  
bring land into  
crop production?*

A—Practices to conserve scarce water for irrigation or to dispose of seasonal excess water by drainage can be used under the ACP, but only on land already in crop production. These practices also add to water use efficiency and benefit urban as well as rural resource and economic stability. They tend to provide insurance against that 1 year in 4 or 5 when the crop would be lost or seriously damaged by either insufficient water or excess water.

## How the ACP Is Administered

*Q—Who administers the Agricultural Conservation Program at the county level?*

A—Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation (ASC) committees of farmers elected by all the farmers in the county. County agents of a State's Agricultural Extension Service are ex officio members of the ASC county committees.

*Q—What help do the ASC farmer committees have?*

A—ASC county committees employ small staffs to handle the ACP and other assigned programs, and use the services of technicians of the Soil Conservation Service and Federal and State foresters as needed. There is continuous consultation among the ASC committee, other leaders, and professional workers in all kinds of conservation.

*Q—How is the ACP fitted to local needs and changing conditions?*

A—In each county, the ASC committee—in consultation with all Federal, State and private organizations concerned with agriculture in that particular county—work out the changes needed to better meet the major conservation problems.



# The Community and the ACP

*Q—How does the  
Agricultural Conservation  
Program benefit professional  
and business people  
serving farmers?*

A—The ACP is a useful tool in bringing about improvements in agriculture advocated by foresters, engineers, teachers, agronomists, bankers, processors, manufacturers, dealers in farm equipment and supplies, and many others. It furthers their own specific interests in better farming insofar as this can be accomplished through soil, water, woodland and wildlife conservation. It undergirds the economy by helping assure the permanence of productive resources.

The ACP boosts the local economy by increasing the efficiency of use of the community's agricultural resources. It furnishes the cost-sharing assistance needed to implement other Federal, State, local and private efforts to help farmers establish good systems of soil and water, woodland and wildlife management and use.

*Q—How can business  
and professional people  
help the community  
through the ACP?*

A—Every community has conservation problems that must be solved if the homes and business establishments are to have enough good-quality water and the products of permanently productive soil. Business and professional people can help the ASC committee determine which conservation problems are most serious and in need of high priority attention from the general viewpoint of the community. Also bankers, teachers and others can encourage owners and operators of farmland to put ACP to its best use.

*Q—Does the ACP help  
the rural areas  
development effort?*

A—Yes. Wherever an area has an economic development plan, ACP can be geared to help in developing soil and water resources essential to the plan. With or without an area plan, the ACP helps farmers protect and improve their land and water resources, and make desirable adjustments in land use.

This conservation work increases the opportunities of farmers to better use their resources, which in turn benefits local businesses, puts labor to work, and improves the economic outlook for the community.

For example, planting trees and improving woodlands help provide materials for increasing local industries and establishing new ones. Planting grasses and legumes on unneeded cropland provides the pasture needed to produce the livestock required to meet our increasing demand for beef. Developing woodlands, grasslands, wildlife habitat and water helps to increase local recreation opportunities for swimming, boating, hunting and fishing.

*Q—Does the ACP contribute  
to the completion of an  
organized watershed  
protection and flood  
prevention project?*

A—Yes. Cost-sharing through the ACP is available for the farmland treatment measures essential for the success of a watershed conservation program. When ACP funds are allocated among the counties, special consideration is given to the advancement of watershed conservation programs. ACP cost-sharing for land treatment measures often makes it possible for farmers to undertake a watershed program, and in all cases to make needed progress on the program.

*Q—How is the ACP related to soil and water conservation districts?*

A—The objectives of these districts and the ACP are parallel. The ACP helps advance a district conservation program by sharing with the farmers in the district the cost of installing conservation practices needed on their farms to attain the program objectives. The governing body of the district is a part of the local group which helps develop the county ACP each year. The ASC county committee handling the ACP and the governing body of the district coordinate the cost-sharing and technical assistance for conservation in the district.

*Q—How does farm conservation work benefit sportsmen and recreationists?*

A—Agricultural conservation greatly increases and improves food, shelter and water for game and fish on the farm. Adequate conservation on farmland helps stabilize stream flow, keeps silt out of adjacent streams and lakes, and improves them for fishing and other sports. Thus, agricultural conservation helps farmers make upland game birds, resident game animals, fish, and even migratory ducks and geese, a harvestable crop on many farms.

*Q—Does the ACP help with fish and wildlife conservation?*

A—Yes. ACP offers cost-sharing to farmers for constructing ponds for game and fish, restoring or developing marshlands, converting croplands into wetlands and food and cover plots, and for protective borders. Other practices that conserve soil, water and woodland also provide fish and game benefits. Among these are the establishment of grasslands, ponds for livestock water, strip-cropping, sod waterways, shelterbelts, gully control, and forest tree and shrub planting.



## Farmers and the ACP

*Q—How does a farmer, rancher or woodland owner get ACP cost-sharing?*

A—He selects one or more practices in the county program which he believes will help solve his conservation problem, and indicates to the ASC county committee the number of units (acres, linear feet, cubic yards, etc.) of each practice for which he wishes cost-sharing.

The county committee considers his request in light of the conservation needs on his farm in relation to the needs of other farms in the county, whether the practice would be carried out to the extent needed without cost-sharing, and the advisability of investing public funds to meet the request.

If all or part of the request is granted, the farmer is informed of the approval, of the actual amount of cost-share he will receive when the practice is completed according to specifications, and provided with other information he will need to perform the practice approved for cost-sharing.

*Q—When do farmers request ACP cost-sharing?*

A—Requests can be approved only when made before work is started. ASC county committees usually announce time limits for requests to be made because of seasons and funds.

*Q—What responsibility do farmers have when they participate in the ACP?*

A—They are responsible for:

- Bearing a large part of the cost of practices, usually at least 50 percent.
- Furnishing or arranging for the materials, equipment and labor involved.
- Completing practices according to specifications.
- Complying with State laws and other regulatory measures that affect the practice.
- Maintaining practices for their normal life.

*Q—Does the ACP share costs with farmers for all types of conservation work?*

A—No. The ACP provides cost-sharing only for the conservation practices for which cost-sharing is most needed to achieve timely essential conservation work. Funds rarely, if ever, permit an ASC county committee to approve all requests.

*Q—How are the various public conservation services related to each other?*

A—Research provides a sound basis for conservation activities. Through education farmers are made aware of the need for conservation, instructed in ways to solve their conservation problems, and taught some of the skills they need. Some conservation practices require skills which farmers usually do not acquire, so professionally trained technical help is made available.

Money to buy needed materials or pay for special services is a major obstacle to accomplishing conservation, so availability of credit may determine whether a conservation project will be carried out. Finally, public cost-sharing, so that the farmer's contribution will not be an undue burden on him, makes possible the utilization of these other services in actually applying conservation measures on his land.

# Some Measures of the Program's Accomplishments 1936-1962

- Farmers, with cost-sharing assistance from the ACP:
- Constructed 1.6 million miles of terraces to control runoff water and erosion—seven times the distance to the moon.
- Planted 3.6 million acres of trees for erosion control and forestry purposes—more than one tree for every person living on the earth today.
- Improved 2.8 million acres of farm woodlands—almost the area of Connecticut.
- Established 317 thousand miles of sod waterways for water management and erosion control—almost the distance an astronaut would travel in a dozen trips around the world.
- Stripcropped 111 million acres to protect soil from erosion—an area almost the size of Michigan, Georgia and Florida combined.
- Built 1.8 million farm ponds for water, grassland and wildlife conservation—an average of 36,000 for each of the 50 States.
- Conserved scarce irrigation water by lining 11 thousand miles of ditches—four times the airline distance between Portland, Maine and Portland, Oregon.
- Improved 275 million acres of rangeland by deferred grazing, contour tillage, and control of undesirable plants—almost equal to the combined areas of Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah.
- Established or reestablished 800 million acres of grass and legume cover for soil protection against wind and water erosion, watershed protection, and land use adjustment—twice the combined area of North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas.

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This publication supersedes PA 293, Answers to Questions about the Agricultural Conservation Program.